Chapter 11

Ensuring Research Integrity and the Ethical Management of Data

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to ensure research integrity and the ethical management of data in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions. Research as a process concerns three scopes relating to examination/inquiry, finding, and application. In Nigerian universities, only two dimensions of research are in use, observation/inquiry and discovery. Consequently, there is lack of transfer of knowledge to the society through the visible creation of new technology products, processes, or even the development of the existing ones. More often than not, however, when attempts are made by students and lecturers in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions to engage in research conduct, writings, and publications, chains of unethical issues and actions are involved or practiced. It is the consideration of some of such unethical behaviors, their consequences, and how data are managed that the present chapter reveals.

INTRODUCTION

The conduct of research is one of the primary functions of university education in Nigeria. Apart from the academic staff being promoted through research publications; research activities improve staff credibility, status and societal well-being. Countries of the world, according to Eminemu (2009), with poor research capacities will
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... become poorer since knowledge creation is the yardstick for national development. University academia recognizes some common ethical norms which different faculties and colleges interpret, apply and balance in different ways in line with their own values and discipline.

According to David and Resrick (2011), ethical norms promote the aims of research in terms of knowledge, truth and avoidance of error. Eminemu (2009) pointed out that universities all over the world are currently differentiated by, among others:

1. The level of their involvement in research
2. The type of problems they attempt to solve
3. The impact of their findings on the societies and the world at large

Nwakpa (2015), stated that the quality of research in Nigerian Universities was of low standard when compared to their counterparts in the developed world. This, according to him, was a result of inadequate financial support, poor electricity, institutional pressure and misplacement of priority. However, recently the Nigeria Federal Government has increased power/electricity supply in the Universities. Educational funding has gradually increased and certain agencies such as the Educational Trust Fund equally fund University research projects most often.

In view of the foregoing, there is hope that research activity in Nigeria will eventually survive, thrive and compete with the developed world. Notwithstanding, this seemingly improved research situations and conduct in Nigerian Universities, there are still instances of experiencing what Bryn and Jordan (2011) discovered in Canada which involved fabrications, falsification, plagiarism and conflict of interest among academic researchers. However, these unethical issues according to them, unlike in Nigeria situations, are being addressed through discussions in a policy forum. Akomolefe, (2009) propounded two main theories about why researchers commit misconducts during research which involved employing “bad apple” theory. According to this theory most scholars are highly ethical, but only when desperate or psychologically disturbed, commit misconduct during research. The second theory is “stressful or imperfect environment” theory. This theory states that misconduct occurs during research processes because of various institutional pressures, incentives and constraints which make people commit misconduct.

Furthermore, adequate management of data has become important in the contemporary society. The volume of data that must be managed by the school system has increased so markedly that it is sometimes referred to as big data. Consequently, data management managers must possess a high level of data management as well as technical skills. This is because data managers use a variety of computer software
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